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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ELEGANT AFTERNOON TO BENEFIT HANDEL CHOIR OF BALTIMORE

Baltimore, MD – Handel Choir of Baltimore will host an afternoon of chamber music and fine wine at Inner Harbour-East's Cinghiale, one of Cindy Wolff and Tony Foreman's trend setting restaurants. This elegant event is in celebration and support of Handel Choir's 75th anniversary season.

The afternoon will feature Mozart's exquisite Quintet for Clarinet and Strings performed by principal chairs of Handel Choir's period instrument orchestra. Chandos Singers, chamber ensemble of Handel Choir, will present *a cappella* selections by Saint-Saëns, Duruflé and Thompson. Throughout its history, Handel Choir has cherished the long-time loyalty of its singers and orchestra members. The musicians participating in this event have donated their performance to benefit the Choir. In addition to elegant music, fine wines selected by Tony Foreman and creative Italian anti-pasti and light fare – both signatures of Cinghiale – will be featured.

Reservations for this event are \$75 per person (\$50 is tax deductible), and can be made by either calling the Handel Choir office 410.366.6544 or online through the Handel Choir website www.handelchoir.org. Cinghiale is located at 822 Lancaster Street, Baltimore, MD 21202. The event will begin at 2pm. Complimentary valet parking will be available.

Sunday 8 November, 2009
2:00 – 4:00 pm
Cinghiale Ristorante
822 Lancaster Street, Baltimore 21202
Enjoy light fare and wines selected by Tony Foreman.

Quintet for Clarinet and Strings, KV 581 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
performed on period instruments by Richard Spece *clarinet*, Christof Richter and
Daniela Pierson *violin*, Daniel Elyar *viola*, and Eve Miller *violoncello*
and
selections by Saint-Saëns, Duruflé, and Thompson
performed by Chandos Singers, chamber ensemble of Handel Choir of Baltimore
Melinda O'Neal *conductor*

Reserve your space by calling Handel Choir's office at 410.366.6544 or online at
www.handelchoir.org
\$75 per person to benefit Handel Choir of Baltimore (\$50 tax deductible)

Complimentary Valet Parking

Please join us for an afternoon of chamber music in an elegant setting to celebrate and support Handel Choir of Baltimore's 75th anniversary season.

BACKGROUND

Melinda O'Neal, now in her sixth season with Handel Choir, comes to Baltimore following twenty-five years of conducting the Handel Society of Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH where she continues as professor of music teaching conducting and music theory. A Maryland native, she received her masters and doctorate in conducting from the Indiana University School of Music. Tim Smith of *The Baltimore Sun* wrote in December 2004, "Melinda O'Neal, in her debut as artistic director and conductor of the Handel Choir, drew appealing intimacy and clarity from these forces...this was historically informed, but never dry, music-making." And in May 2005 "...in a particularly inspired move, O'Neal decided to supplement the chorus with an orchestra of period instruments, providing a touch of historical coloring and perspective."

HANDEL CHOIR OF BALTIMORE

An oratorio ensemble presenting baroque, classic, and early romantic works with period-instrument orchestras, Handel Choir also performs modern repertoire, commissioned works and joins in collaboration with orchestras and opera companies in the Baltimore-Washington area. In 2008, *The Baltimore Sun's* Tim Smith called the Choir "a potent chorus" and wrote, "Two Bach cantatas received dynamic performances from the choristers," and he lauded Handel Choir's "stylish" period instrument orchestra.

Recent collaborations include performances with Baltimore Chamber Orchestra of Fauré's Requiem, Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs*, Jonathan Leshnoff's *Requiem for the Fallen* commissioned by Handel Choir, and appearances with Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Handel's *Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne* presented with Pro Musica Rara and Peabody Early Music was called by *The Baltimore Sun* "... a vivid, vital performance...elegantly conducted by Melinda O'Neal."

During Handel Choir's 75-year history, performance of Handel's *Messiah* has been an uninterrupted annual tradition, expanded in 2009 to two performances with period instruments. Handel Choir also sponsors Chandos Singers, a 16-20 voice ensemble, which will perform in American Opera Theatre's staged version of Handel's oratorio *Jephtha* in April 2010.

RECENT REVIEWS OF HANDEL CHOIR

on the Handel Choir's *O Eternal Fire* concert

"Melinda O'Neal has steadily and rapidly honed this formerly uneven ensemble into quite a potent chorus. The Handel and Bach program ... found the singers maintaining solid intonation, clarity of articulation and sensitivity to the shape of phrases. There was a telling sign early on of how much O'Neal has done for the group — the firm, colorful way individual voices started off the contrapuntal flurry of the Alleluia in Handel's *Coronation Anthem*, "The King shall rejoice." That was the kind of detail that would not have been so beautifully realized in the pre-O'Neal days that I experienced. Two Bach cantatas received dynamic performances from the choristers, who were backed stylishly by a period instrument orchestra. ... It was a thoughtfully constructed, entertaining program delivered with an informed sense of historic style.

— Tim Smith, *The Baltimore Sun Clef Notes*, November 10, 2008

on the Handel Choir's collaboration with the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra

"Handel Choir artistic director Melinda O'Neal took the podium for the *Five Mystical Songs* by Vaughan Williams.... O'Neal was adept at bringing out the unmistakable inner glow that animates nearly all of his music and that flows with particular power in this score.... The chorus, which sounds more confident and cohesive every time I hear it, demonstrated admirable sensitivity."

— Tim Smith, *The Baltimore Sun Clef Notes*, October 20, 2008

on the top fifteen classical music concerts of the Baltimore/Washington 2006-2007 season

In Tim Smith's review of the 2006-2007 classical music season, the Handel Choir was one of fifteen "highest-highpoints." Smith stated, "the Handel Choir of Baltimore, Pro Musica Rara, Peabody Renaissance Ensemble and Baltimore Baroque Band collaborat[ed] on a vivid, vital performance of Handel's *Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne*, elegantly conducted by Melinda O'Neal."

— Tim Smith, *The Baltimore Sun*, June 19, 2007

on the Handel Choir of Baltimore's performance of Haydn's *The Creation*

"The turnout — and the performance level — reaffirmed the strides the ensemble has been making in recent years. ... Melinda O'Neal, the choir's artistic director, shaped Haydn's wonderfully descriptive music with an ear for drama and flow. Her choristers were attentive to subtleties of articulation, phrasing and balance. The orchestra of period instruments ... played with vibrant color. The guest soloists brought vocal refinement and eloquence of line to their assignments."

— Tim Smith, *The Baltimore Sun*, May 1, 2007

UPCOMING HANDEL CHOIR CONCERTS

I. Handel Choir of Baltimore and Baltimore Chamber Orchestra

Sunday, October 18, 2009 at 3pm

Kraushaar Auditorium, Goucher College

1021 Dulaney Valley Road, Towson 21286

2pm pre-concert discussion with WBJC's Jonathan Palevsky.

Leopold Mozart Toy Symphony

Mendelssohn Psalm 115, Op. 31 Nicht unserm Namen, Herr (Not unto us, Lord)
Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich (Grant us peace)

Beethoven Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67

Clara Rottsohlk *soprano*

Jeffrey Fahnestock *tenor*

Phillip Collister *baritone*

Markand Thakar *conductor*, Baltimore Chamber Orchestra

Melinda O'Neal *artistic director & conductor*, Handel Choir of Baltimore

With a combined 102-year history of providing music performances to Baltimore audiences, HCB and BCO join for their third collaboration. We honor Mendelssohn's 200th anniversary (b. 1809) and the role his music played in Handel Choir's founding with two works composed in this prodigy's early twenties. And then, well, there's nothing quite like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

II. Handel's *Messiah* — two performances in two locations!

Saturday, December 12, 2009 at 8pm

St. Ignatius Church

740 North Calvert Street, Baltimore 21202

7pm pre-concert lecture by Andrew Talle, Department of Musicology,
Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University.

Sunday, December 13 at 4pm

The Church of the Redeemer

5603 North Charles Street, Baltimore 21210

3pm pre-concert lecture by Andrew Talle, Department of Musicology,
Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University.

Katharine Dain *soprano*
Ian Howell *countertenor*
Steven Brennfleck *tenor*
Craig Phillips *bass*

Handel Choir & Handel Period Instrument Orchestra
Melinda O'Neal *conductor*

Handel Choir holds the distinction of having performed *Messiah* annually since 1935, the longest consecutive run in Baltimore. Ever fresh, ever new, our performance offers this cherished work with period instruments and distinguished guest soloists in the architecturally stunning, acoustically beguiling Church of the Immaculate Conception. Join us to enjoy this annual holiday tradition!

Handel rarely performed *Messiah* in the same way, from the première in Dublin in 1742 to annual performances at London's Foundling Hospital to performances in Covent Garden Royal Opera House and the three performances he led in 1759, the year of his death. He varied the content to suit the occasion, sometimes re-writing arias or recitatives and assigning them to different voices to best showcase the singers he had available at the time. All the choral parts were sung by males, with boy choristers singing the soprano parts and male altos or counter tenors singing the alto parts, for a total of about 30 choristers. The vocal soloists were usually international stars from the opera house. In 1788 Mozart arranged *Messiah* for performances in Vienna, adding new woodwind instruments, translating the work into German, modernizing phrasings, adding dynamic markings and enlarging the performing forces. *Messiah* fell into obscurity in England after Handel's death but was rediscovered in the 1820's and performed with expanded, "romantic" musical forces and performance conventions. In 1834 there were 644 performers in Westminster Abby for the Royal Music Festival, and there were 3,000 performers and 10,000 audience members for later renditions in the gigantic Crystal Palace.

The Handel Choir's performance cannot be called authentic just by virtue of returning to smaller performing forces and using period instruments, for such a thing as authenticity is not attainable. But we would like to think Handel might at least give a little smile at our efforts to enjoy this work in perhaps a closer resemblance to its original renderings, all the while sharing in the "infinite self-renewal" of this marvelous work.

III. British/American Connection

Sunday, April 18, 2010 at 4pm

Grace United Methodist Church

5407 North Charles Street, Baltimore 21210

3pm pre-concert lecture by Richard Giarusso, Department of Musicology, Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University.

Britten	Antiphon
Vaughan Williams	Mass in G minor (double chorus and soli)
Howells	Rhapsody No. 3, Op. 17 for organ

Tavener Funeral Ikos
Ives Psalm 67
Thompson Bitter-Sweet, Alleluia
 and selected British and American folk songs
Handel Choir & Chandos Singers
Jonathan Moyer *organ, piano*
Melinda O'Neal *conductor*

Our great 19th- and 20th-century American and British choral traditions were ignited by Handel in the 18th century. Here are astounding modern fruits of Handel's legacy.

IV. Handel's *Jephtha*

A co-production with American Opera Theatre

Friday, April 30, 2010 at 7:30pm

Saturday, May 1, 2010 at 7:30pm

First English Lutheran Church

3807 North Charles Street, Baltimore 21218

Jephtha Tony Boutté
Storge Sophie Louise Roland
Iphis Emily Noël
Hamor Andrew Rader
Zebul Adonis Abuyen

Chandos Singers & Ignoti Dei Baroque Orchestra

Timothy Nelson *artistic director*

Melinda O'Neal *conductor*

Forced to stop several times due to impending blindness, Handel composed his final oratorio *Jephtha* (based on the Old Testament's Book of Judges) in his last days. Choose one of these two staged performances to experience this most powerful and human of Handel oratorios.

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